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multi-sensory  
education

## Bergen Meadow

Bergen Meadow Primary School is a public school serving ~283 students in grades preschool through second grade. Its sister school, Bergen Valley Intermediate, serves 228 students in grades 3-5. Considered one school in two locations, “the Bergens” rely on data to drive instruction and meet the needs of each learner.

### CHALLENGE

Five years ago, the reading scores for Bergen Meadow had plateaued. Teachers desired to have a deeper understanding of how students learn to read, as well as a set of powerful strategies for helping students become successful readers. They sought a systematic approach to spelling. Foundations was too slow for general classroom instruction and Wilson Reading was also too slow for the special education students in that it had 10 steps in each lesson. Teachers rarely passed step three because of the time investment.

Bergen Meadow aspired to meet the needs of its entire student population and it quickly became obvious that the multi-sensory approach to literacy would get the students engaged and learning, regardless of their baseline proficiency. Bergen Meadow committed its early intervention literacy program to altering – for the better – what would happen once a young reader became an intermediate student. The school felt it was vital to build reading and spelling skills with just one resource throughout the school to impact student progress.



*“When our new principal joined, she dug into how Bergen Meadow was different from other schools in the area with respect to early literacy instruction. Two nearby schools were using Orton-Gillingham, but only with their students with dyslexia. Since the multi-sensory approach was prominent in our community, and because we wanted all our students to have the advantage of learning alphabetic patterns and words with engagement of all learning modalities, our principal chose to train all our teachers in Orton-Gillingham, beginning with special education teachers, followed by instructional coaches; and then school-wide.”*

Bergen Meadow had already been involved with other literacy intervention programs and decided that the students who were most in need required an effective approach that focused on the decoding skills that would lead to success in reading. The leadership, which was already familiar with Orton-Gillingham, decided to send the SPED (special education) team to an IMSE training where they met Amy Gulley, a Level 4 Master Instructor, Practicum Supervisor, IDA Certified Dyslexia Specialist, and Certified Language Therapist with IMSE.

Amy lit a spark for the Bergen Meadow team and they were enthusiastic about training with her for K-5 multi-sensory instruction. As an added bonus, the teachers did not have to travel and successfully added three additional elementary schools to the training. IMSE also provided a discount for the training, based on volume, which was attractive to the Bergen Meadow team.

IMSE has three courses that are being taught to Bergen educators. IMSE's Comprehensive OG (a 30-hour course for K-2), IMSE's Intermediate (a 30-hour course for Grades 3-5), and IMSE's Phonological Awareness or PA (a 12.5-hour course foundational for all educators).

The learning specialists in both Bergen Meadow and Bergen Valley all completed their IMSE Comprehensive OG training within the first year. By the beginning of the second year, everyone on staff had participated in a five-day training – a massive accomplishment. The following year, Bergen's fourth and fifth grade teachers took IMSE's Intermediate training, which is completed in just three days if the teacher has completed IMSE's Comprehensive training. Since then, every time the school adds a new teacher, within two years, the teacher is trained in IMSE's Comprehensive Orton-Gillingham instruction. 2021 marks the first year Bergen Meadow has sent a general ed teacher to IMSE's phonemic awareness training.



## RESULTS

At Bergen Meadow (K-2), 100% of the reading instructors are trained on IMSE's Structured Literacy approach, which includes the best of Orton-Gillingham and more. The average class size is 25 students and IMSE training has boosted core instruction in every classroom since 2017. In grades 3-5, all instructors are trained even if the methodology is not used in a comprehensive – beginning-middle-end – manner.

Almost immediately, Bergen Meadow's DIBELS scores went up, reading speed, letter recognition, knowing the sounds of the letters, and pre-reading and reading skills. The school's SPED data also improved, the school had fewer primary students on a reading plan. As of last year, the Bergen Meadow's third graders had been learning with Orton-Gillingham since kindergarten and the school achieved the lowest number of reading plans ever for the third grade in the school's history – and that was during the pandemic!

Bergen schools experienced incredible growth last year despite learning through a pandemic. The systematic Structured Literacy with Orton-Gillingham Instruction Bundles, which provide an engaging way to create online lessons, enabled teachers to deliver seamless instruction both remotely and in-person, and proved to be highly effective.

*"Cost is the biggest factor holding schools back from adopting Orton-Gillingham and buying training for more teachers is rarely an option. IMSE turns this math upside down by reducing the number of required reading plans or IEPs. After training with IMSE, we were able to impact so many students because the training was so easy to apply in the classrooms and see near immediate results."*



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